

Appl. No. 09/574,909

Amdt. dated 5/19/2004

Reply to Office Action of 11/19/2003

AMENDMENT**Amendment to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Please amend claims 1, 15, 37, 46, 62

Please add claims 71-78

Please cancel claims 10-11, 22, 28, 30-32, and 68-69, without prejudice.

1. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
- establishing a database of pre-screened home service providers;
- one or more processors extracting a sufficiently descriptive and detailed
- description of a consumer's service needs so as to allow bids to be submitted by one or
- more of the pre-screen home service providers using a question and answer interview
- appropriate for the consumer's desired home service task, wherein the question and
- answer interview allows the consumer to narrow alternatives that describe the consumer's
- service needs while selections by the consumer lead them to a new set of alternatives and
- choices;
- the one or more processors packaging and presenting the consumer's service
- needs to one or more home service providers in the database of pre-screened home
- service providers that exhibit a set of predetermined qualifications relating to the
- consumer's service needs; and
- the one or more processors presenting one or more affirmative home service
- provider responses to the consumer.

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- 1 2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving
2 confirmation of completed service transactions by initiating automatic follow-up
3 communication with one or more of the consumer and the home service providers.
- 1 3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 making inferences regarding desirability of a particular home service task to home
3 service providers based upon past service requests to which the home service providers
4 have responded or not responded; and
5 prioritizing referral of home service providers based upon recent service
6 opportunities provided to or accepted by the home service providers.
- 1 4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the home service providers are
2 pre-screened based on information they provide, including one or more of service type,
3 geographic region of operation, service response and fulfillment time, preferred
4 communication mechanism and types of transaction services for which they would like to
5 be considered.
- 1 5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 compiling ratings and reviews regarding the home service providers that have
3 completed one or more service transactions on behalf of one or more matched consumers
4 and have been rated and reviewed by the one or more matched consumers;
5 assigning a rating score to the home service providers based on the ratings and
6 reviews;
7 assigning a quality seal to the home service providers based on the ratings and
8 reviews; and

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9 presenting the quality seal associated with a particular home service provider
10 when information regarding the particular home service provider is requested by a
11 consumer.

1 6. (Canceled)

1 7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the consumer's service needs
2 may be presented to the one or more home service providers, by way of a set of
3 heterogeneous communication devices depending upon preferences supplied by the one
4 or more home service providers.

1 8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the set of heterogeneous
2 communication devices includes one or more of facsimile, pager, mobile phone, home
3 phone, office phone, wireless internet device, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) unit, cell
4 text messaging and email.

1 9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more home service
2 providers may choose to submit a quote for the consumer's service needs, indicating a
3 desire to be presented to the consumer, or reject the home service task.

10-12. (Canceled)

1 13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 capturing basic information regarding the home service providers;
3 collecting preference information from the home service providers to facilitate
4 matching among consumers and the home service providers.

1 14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the basic information includes
2 one or more of business name, address, number of years in operation, number of
3 employees, one or more service interests, and credit information.

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1 15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the preference information
2 includes ~~one or more of~~ one or more service types, geographic region of operation,
3 service expenditure size range, service response and fulfillment time, and one or more
4 preferred communication mechanisms.

16. (Canceled)

1 17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the preference information
2 further includes the type of consumer service requests that the home service providers are
3 interested in receiving.

1 18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the preferred communication
2 mechanism comprises one or more of facsimile, a pager, mobile phone, home phone,
3 office phone, wireless internet device, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) unit, cell text
4 messaging and e-mail.

19-26. (Canceled)

1 27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving confirmation
2 from the consumer regarding completion of a service transaction with one of the home
3 service provider.

28-36. (Canceled)

1 37. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
2 one or more processors receiving an indication of a service category from a
3 consumer;
4 the one or more processors developing a detailed description of the consumer's
5 service needs by receiving consumer input using question and answer interviews

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6 generated by a decision tree based upon currently available information about the
7 consumer's service needs;

8 the one or more processors enabling the consumer to one or more of receive,
9 obtain and solicit information from a plurality of pre-screened home service providers by
10 presenting the consumer's service needs as a service request to each of the plurality of
11 pre-screened home service providers, the service request including appropriately
12 descriptive and detailed information to enable home service providers associated with the
13 service category to make a decision whether to accept the service request; and

14 the one or more processors compiling a list of pre-qualified home service
15 providers who have confirmed their interest in meeting the consumer's service needs or
16 who have otherwise shown interest in services similar to the consumer's service needs,
17 by making one or more inferences based on past service requests to which the home
18 service providers have responded or not responded and by selecting home service
19 providers with the least number of recent service opportunities.

1 38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising:

2 receiving consumer input relating to the consumer's service needs; and
3 guiding the consumer to the service category by presenting additional questions
4 and using information gathered to cross reference a knowledge management database.

1 39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the service request includes one
2 or more of estimated appropriate measurements, product identifiers and desired solutions.

1 40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising presenting the
2 consumer with an appropriate templated form for expressing the consumer's service
3 needs.

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- 1 41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising presenting the
2 consumer with one or more visual images to facilitate development of a correct service
3 need description.
- 1 42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving
2 information indicative of the consumer's preferred communication mechanism for use by
3 home service providers.
- 1 43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving
2 information indicative of a deadline for completion of the consumer's service needs.
- 1 44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, further comprising receiving
2 information indicative of the consumer's preference regarding one or more rating factors,
3 including one or more of timeliness, quality, value, budget, communication,
4 courteousness and cleanliness.
- 1 45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 44, wherein the one or more rating factors
2 are used to develop a composite home service provider rating for use in said matching.
- 1 46. (Currently Amended) A method of matching consumers and service providers
2 comprising:
3 one or more processors creating home service provider profiles based upon (i)
4 basic information received from a plurality of home service providers, including name,
5 address, and one or more of experience level, licensing and years in operation, and (ii)
6 preference information, including one or more of service types, geographic region of
7 operation and a preferred communication mechanism;
8 the one or more processors receiving a service request from a consumer including
9 basic information, including one or more of name, address and location of service, and

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10 preference information, including one or more of price, quality, value, budget,

11 courteousness, timeliness and communication mechanism;

12 the one or more processors identifying a set of prescreened home service
13 providers of the plurality of home service providers that are eligible to quote or be
14 matched to the consumer based upon the service request and the home service provider
15 profiles;

16 the one or more processors presenting the identified set of prescreened home
17 service providers with sufficiently descriptive and detailed data regarding a home service
18 task associated with the service request so as to allow acceptance or rejection of the home
19 improvement task by the home service providers of the identified set of qualified home
20 service providers, wherein personally identifiable information relating to the consumer is
21 withheld;

22 the one or more processors receiving responses from a plurality of the identified
23 set of qualified home service providers acknowledging the service request and
24 confirming their interest in performing the home improvement task; and

25 the one or more processors providing the consumer's contact information only to
26 a first predetermined number of the plurality of the identified set of qualified home
27 service providers from whom responses are received.

47-49. (Canceled)

1 50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein the service request is matched
2 against the home service provider profiles.

51-54. (Canceled)

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1 55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, further comprising presenting the
2 consumer with information regarding the first predetermined number of the plurality of
3 the identified set of qualified home service providers from whom responses are received.

56-61. (Canceled)

1 62. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

2 one or more processors extracting a description of a consumer's home service
3 needs using an interview appropriate for the consumer's home service task;

4 the one or more processors allowing a plurality of home service providers that
5 meet a set of predetermined qualifications to review the consumer's service needs by
6 packaging the consumer's service needs as a service request and presenting the service
7 request to the plurality of home service providers without providing personally
8 identifiable information relating to the consumer; and

9 the one or more processors providing the consumer's contact information only to
10 a first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers that accept the
11 service request.

1 63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, further comprising notifying the
2 consumer as acceptances from the plurality of home service providers are received.

1 64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, further comprising after receiving
2 acceptances from the first predetermined number of the plurality of home service
3 providers, notifying the consumer that the first predetermined number of the plurality of
4 home service providers have expressed interest in the consumer's service needs.

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- 1 65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, further comprising allowing the
2 consumer to view information pertaining to the first predetermined number of the
3 plurality of home service providers.
- 1 66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65, wherein a graphical representation of
2 the consumer rating information is presented to the consumer in the form of a star system.
- 1 67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, wherein the set of predetermined
2 qualifications include one or more of types of service transactions for which the plurality
3 of home service providers have expressed interest, geographic region of operation of the
4 plurality of home service providers, licensing and desired fulfillment time category of the
5 plurality of home service providers.

68-69. (Canceled)

- 1 70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62, further comprising after completion of
2 the consumer's service needs, collecting feedback from the consumer regarding reasons
3 for not selecting particular home service providers of the first predetermined number of
4 the plurality of home service providers and making the feedback available to the first
5 predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers.
- 1 71. (New) A method comprising:
2 one or more processors establishing a database of pre-screened home service
3 providers;
4 the one or more processors extracting a sufficiently descriptive and detailed
5 description of a consumer's service needs so as to allow bids to be submitted by one or
6 more of the pre-screen home service providers using a question and answer interview
7 corresponding to the consumer's desired home service task;

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8 the one or more processors packaging and presenting the consumer's service
9 needs to one or more home service providers in the database of pre-screened home
10 service providers that exhibit a set of predetermined qualifications relating to the
11 consumer's service needs;

12 the one or more processors causing an automated telephone system to notify at
13 least one of the one or more home service providers of the consumer's service needs; and

14 the one or more processors presenting one or more affirmative home service
15 provider responses to the consumer.

1 72. (New) The method of claim 71, further comprising providing the pre-screened home
2 service providers with access to an interactive voice response (IVR) database from which
3 the pre-screened home service providers can check the status of or respond to consumer
4 service requests.

1 73. (New) A method comprising:

2 one or more processors receiving an indication of a service category from a
3 consumer;

4 the one or more processors developing a detailed description of the consumer's
5 service needs by receiving consumer input using question and answer interviews
6 generated by a decision tree based upon currently available information about the
7 consumer's service needs;

8 the one or more processors enabling the consumer to one or more of receive,
9 obtain and solicit information from a plurality of pre-screened home service providers by
10 presenting the consumer's service needs as a service request to each of the plurality of
11 pre-screened home service providers, the service request including appropriately
12 descriptive and detailed information to enable home service providers associated with the
13 service category to make a decision whether to accept the service request, wherein the

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14 service request is delivered to at least one of the plurality of pre-screened home service
15 providers via an automated telephone system; and

16 the one or more processors compiling a list of pre-qualified home service
17 providers who have confirmed their interest in meeting the consumer's service needs or
18 who have otherwise shown interest in services similar to the consumer's service needs,
19 by making one or more inferences based on past service requests to which the home
20 service providers have responded or not responded and by selecting home service
21 providers with the least number of recent service opportunities.

1 74. (New) The method of claim 73, further comprising providing the plurality of pre-
2 screened home service providers with access to an interactive voice response (IVR)
3 database from which the pre-screened home service providers can check the status of or
4 respond to service requests.

1 75. (New) A method comprising:
2 one or more processors extracting a description of a consumer's home service
3 needs using an interview appropriate for the consumer's home service task;
4 the one or more processors allowing a plurality of home service providers that
5 meet a set of predetermined qualifications to review the consumer's service needs by
6 packaging the consumer's service needs as a service request and presenting the service
7 request to the plurality of home service providers without providing personally
8 identifiable information relating to the consumer, wherein the service request is delivered
9 to at least one of the plurality of pre-screened home service providers via an automated
10 telephone system; and
11 the one or more processors providing the consumer's contact information only to
12 a first predetermined number of the plurality of home service providers that accept the
13 service request.

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1 76. (New) The method of claim 75, further comprising providing the plurality of home
2 service providers with access to an interactive voice response (IVR) database from which
3 the plurality of home service providers can check the status of or respond to service
4 requests.

1 77. (New) A method comprising:

2 one or more processors performing a step for receiving an indication of a service
3 category from a consumer;

4 the one or more processors performing a step for developing a detailed description
5 of the consumer's service needs by receiving consumer input using question and answer
6 interviews generated by a decision tree based upon currently available information about
7 the consumer's service needs;

8 the one or more processors performing a step for enabling the consumer to one or
9 more of receive, obtain and solicit information from a plurality of pre-screened home
10 service providers by presenting the consumer's service needs as a service request to each
11 of the plurality of pre-screened home service providers, the service request including
12 appropriately descriptive and detailed information to enable home service providers
13 associated with the service category to make a decision whether to accept the service
14 request; and

15 the one or more processors performing a step for compiling a list of pre-qualified
16 home service providers who have confirmed their interest in meeting the consumer's
17 service needs or who have otherwise shown interest in services similar to the consumer's
18 service needs, by making one or more inferences based on past service requests to which
19 the home service providers have responded or not responded and by selecting home
20 service providers with the least number of recent service opportunities.

1 78. (New) A method comprising:

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2 one or more processors performing a step for extracting a description of a
3 consumer's home service needs using an interview appropriate for the consumer's home
4 service task;

5 the one or more processors performing a step for allowing a plurality of home
6 service providers that meet a set of predetermined qualifications to review the consumer's
7 service needs by packaging the consumer's service needs as a service request and
8 presenting the service request to the plurality of home service providers without
9 providing personally identifiable information relating to the consumer; and

10 the one or more processors performing a step for providing the consumer's
11 contact information only to a first predetermined number of the plurality of home service
12 providers that accept the service request.